

prised at "Wissemburg, overthrown at Woerth,
thrust back
from Borny and Gravelotte under Metz,
routed at Beaumont, surrounded and captured at Sedan.
The Empire
fell, and a fortnight later the Germans
invested Paris.
Zola, now in his thirty-first year, was not called
upon to
undertake any military duties like others of
that age, for,
being the only son of a widow, the law exempted
him from
service. It is true, no doubt, that other
widows' sons at
that time occasionally joined the colours as
volunteers, in
spite of the legal exemption. And on that
account, at a
subsequent period, directly after the
publication of "La
De'ba'cle," Zola's enemies made much of the
fact that he had
not done likewise.

But proper allowance should be made for his
circumstances at the time. The investment of
Paris had cut
him off from his usual sources of income; he
found him-
self virtually adrift, at Marseilles, with his sick
wife and his
old mother, who had become more or less
infirm. They had
little or no money, there was no relative with
whom they
might seek a refuge, and if Zola, in a fine spirit
of patriotism,
had gone to join the army, the two women
would have
become dependent on the charity of the
public. At first
Zola was at a loss what to do. But meeting
M. Arnaud,

who had published his "Mysteres de
Marseilles" in the
"Messenger de Provence," he prevailed on him to
run a popular halfpenny war journal, which was called "
La Marseil-
laise." Zola's friend, Marius Koux, who was
then also in
the city, joined him in the venture, and between
them they
wrote the whole paper, which at the outset
seemed likely
to prove successful, its sales amounting to ten
and fifteen
thousand copies; but typographical and other
difficulties